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KAY WARD
ACTING MANAGER EXAMINATION
SUPPORT AND SALES

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PROVISIONAL SPECIFICATION FOR THE INVENTION ENTITLED:

Collectible Interactive Trading Cards

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This invention is best described in the following statement:

COLLECTIBLE INTERACTIVE TRADING CARDS

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Technical Field of the Invention

The present invention relates generally to collectibles and, in particular, to collectible trading cards. The present invention relates to a method and apparatus for trading collectible interactive trading smartcards. The invention also relates to a
15 collectible interactive trading smartcard system, and to a computer program product including a computer readable medium having recorded thereon a computer program for implementing said system.

Background Art

20 Trading cards are well known, and are commonly bought, sold, traded and collected by many people. These cards are typically produced as sets of cards pertaining to a specific subject, and individual cards in a set typically contain information and images relating to different aspects of that particular subject. For example, a set of trading cards depicting a specific baseball team might have individual cards, each of
25 which depicts a different member of the team. Similarly, a set of trading cards relating to

a particular movie could consist of individual cards, each of which depicts a specific character from the movie. Trading cards have traditionally been physical cards, made of printed cardboard, plastic, paper or metal.

US Patent 5,689,561 describes a computer-based trading card system which uses
5 diskettes as an item which is traded between people. Each of the aforementioned diskettes contains a "key", which is used to unlock data from a compact disk memory (CD ROM), where the CD ROM is accessible across a communications network. This CD ROM contains data relating to "cards" in the set of trading cards, and makes this data available to a trader having the aforementioned diskette, and the trader is able to store this
10 data on a hard disk. After a single use, however, the key on the diskette is typically disabled permanently.

US Patent 5,748,731 is directed towards "electronic trading cards" where individual encrypted electronic files represent virtual trading cards, and these files are decrypted by a user when the user has a corresponding decryption key.

15 Also currently available are various types of digital trading cards, which can be bought, sold, and swapped in "virtual" form, ie. without involving a physical card or a physical medium having stored thereon an electronic version of the card. Examples of this genre include Inzomnia ^{propr} digital trading cards, and Cyberaction ^{propr} interactive digital trading cards.

20 In addition to being used for trading and collecting, trading cards can also be used for playing games. These include simple memory games, in which, for example, trading cards are placed face-down, and players attempt to find pairs of matching cards. More sophisticated strategy games are also possible. US patent 5,662,332 is directed to game playing which involves use of trading cards as game components. In one version of

this game, cards being used by a player can gain "energy", which allows the player to use the card to perform specific actions particular to the card in question.

US Patent 5,662,332 is directed to a similar type of game, incorporating physical cards as well as equivalent electronic components in computer games, interactive
5 networks and other media.

Smartcards, as well as performing their conventional electronic purpose, can also be collected, traded and displayed in collections. Some types of smartcard, such as phone cards, are printed with attractive pictures having different designs on different cards, and these are well suited to collecting and trading activities. When used electronically
10 however, these cards are typically used for unrelated purposes, such as banking, access to public telephones and so on.

Physical Trading cards typically have printed information concerning the relevant subject matter displayed on the card itself. Thus in one example, statistics relating to the particular baseball player who is pictured on the card can be printed on the
15 card. In another example, a depiction of a game character can be printed on the card, as well as characteristics of the character. If an owner of such a trading card wishes to find out more information about the subject depicted on the card, the owner must typically access associated material in physical form, such as a related brochure. Alternatively, the owner may visit a "web site" which is identified on the card. The physical cards, in this
20 case, can be implemented with a shape and functionality of a CD ROM, thereby being insertable into a CD ROM drive on a personal computer (PC). This facilitates access to network based associated information. Power Deck ^{propr} trading cards from UpperDeck ^{propr} use this aforementioned approach.

The need to insert the aforementioned type of CD ROM trading cards into a PC places a conceptual barrier between the user and the trading card environment, and attenuates the degree to which the trading card owner can relate to this environment.

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Disclosure of the Invention

It is an object of the present invention to substantially overcome, or at least ameliorate, one or more disadvantages of existing arrangements.

According to a first aspect of the invention, there is provided a collectible dual-purpose smartcard system, comprising:

10 a plurality of collectible smartcards, each having a programmable user interface;
smartcard data disposed on said each smartcard which is thereby adapted to provide a collectible functionality;

a smartcard reader for reading at least some of said smartcard data, and responsive to a user interaction with said user interface;

15 a database, responsive to said smartcard reader, said database providing, dependent upon said user interaction, database data correlated to said smartcard data, thereby enhancing said adaptation for said collectible functionality.

According to a second aspect of the invention, there is provided a collectible trading card system, comprising:

20 a plurality of collectible smartcards, each having a programmable user interface;
smartcard data disposed on said each smartcard which is thereby adapted for collectible trading;

a smartcard reader for reading at least some of said smartcard data, and responsive to a user interaction with said user interface;

a database, responsive to said smartcard reader, said database providing, dependent upon said user interaction, database data correlated to said smartcard data, thereby enhancing said adaptation for collectible trading.

According to a another aspect of the invention, there is provided a method for trading collectible trading smartcards, each having a programmable user interface, said method comprising steps of:

choosing a smartcard for possible trading;

ascribing, dependent upon smartcard data of said chosen smartcard, a card based value;

assessing, dependent upon database data correlated with said smartcard data, an associated database-based value, said database data provided by a user interaction with said user interface;

determining a composite smartcard value, dependent upon said card based value and said database-based value; and

trading said chosen smartcard dependent upon said composite smartcard value.

According to another aspect of the invention there is provided a computer program product comprising a computer program for implementing a collectible trading card system, each trading card having a programmable user interface said program comprising:

code for a choosing step for choosing a smartcard for possible trading;

code for an ascribing step for ascribing, dependent upon smartcard data of said chosen smartcard, a card based value;

code for an assessing step for assessing, dependent upon database data correlated with said smartcard data, an associated database-based value, said database data provided by a user interaction with said user interface;

code for a determining step for determining a composite smartcard value, dependent upon said card based value and said database-based value; and

code for a trading step for trading said chosen smartcard dependent upon said composite smartcard value.

5 According to yet another aspect of the invention there is provided a method of playing a collectible trading card game, comprising steps of:

(i) selecting a smartcard from a plurality of collectible trading smartcards, each said smartcard having a programmable user interface;

(ii) reading by a smartcard reader of a user interaction with said interface;

10 (iii) at least one of navigating, searching and exploring, dependent upon said user interaction, a database which is responsive to said smartcard reader; and

(iv) accessing associated database data; whereby said method comprises, if said game objective is comparison of corresponding database data, a further step of:

(v) comparing said associated database data with corresponding database data for
15 another smartcard from said plurality of collectible trading smartcards.

Brief Description of the Drawings

A number of preferred embodiments of the present invention will now be described with reference to the drawings, in which:

20 Fig. 1 is a system representation of a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 2 is a flow chart of method steps by which trading cards according to the preferred embodiment can be traded;

Fig. 3 is a flow chart of method steps in accordance with the preferred
25 embodiment by which a game can be played using trading cards; and

Fig. 4 is a schematic block diagram of a general purpose computer upon which the preferred embodiment of the present invention can be practiced.

Detailed Description including Best Mode

5 Where reference is made in any one or more of the accompanying drawings to steps and/or features, which have the same reference numerals, those steps and/or features have for the purposes of this description the same function(s) or operation(s), unless the contrary intention appears.

 In the context of this specification, the word "comprising" means "including
10 principally but not necessarily solely" or "having" or "including" and not "consisting only of". Variations of the word comprising, such as "comprise" and "comprises" have corresponding meanings.

 Fig. 1 is a system representation of a preferred embodiment of the present invention. A set 100 of collectible trading smartcards, of which a particular smartcard
15 102 is representative, are shown, as depicted by a dashed arrow 104, in a magnified form 106. In this magnified form 106, it is seen that the trading smartcard has an associated on-board processor and/or memory 108 disposed on a surface of the card 106. In the present instance, the processor and/or memory 108 are disposed on a rear surface of the card, as depicted by a curved arrow 134. The card 106 further comprises a number of
20 "icons" 110, each such icon comprising a visually distinctive image, which can be either text, or graphic in nature. Furthermore, the card 106 has a larger image area 112, which comprises a mixture of text and/or graphic information, and typically relates to a key topic with which the card 106 is concerned. In addition to the visual data 112, each icon 110 can itself contain additional information, this being depicted by a dashed arrow 138.

Thus, for instance, the image region 112 can depict a famous baseball player, and the icon 110 contains the text, "scoring record" as well as a summary data in this regard. In this case, the card 106 is a baseball trading card relating to a particular player, and the set of cards 100 is a corresponding set of baseball trading cards relating to the
5 particular baseball team.

The set 100 of trading cards can be used in a traditional fashion, with cards being bought, sold, and swapped in accordance with their perceived "value", as measured by attributes associated with the physical cards themselves. This value is typically associated with the particular player featured on the card, as well as the attractiveness of
10 the card to the traders involved, and the scarcity of the card.

In addition, however, the card 106 can be inserted, as depicted by a dashed arrow 114, into a smartcard reader 128 through an access slot 132. When the card 106 is so inserted, the various icons (eg. 110) and visual information (eg. 112) are visible through an aperture 130 which is provided in the smartcard reader 128. The smartcard reader 128
15 in the figure is connected, by a connection 144, to a processor 116 which has a display region 118. The processor 116 is functionally connected to the cardreader 128, and thereby has access to the card processor 108. Accordingly, the processor 116 is able to detect, and respond, to user interactions with the card 106, the user interactions with the card 106 typically being detected by a touch-screen which is situated above the card 106
20 in the aperture 130. In the description, the phrase "pressing on the icon" clearly infers detection of the aforementioned pressing action by the touch-screen. Accordingly, a user can press on the icon 110 once the card 106 is inserted into the smartcard reader 128, and the processor 116 is able to detect this user interaction, and to associate it with an interface description 136 which corresponds to the icon 110. The interface description
25 136 defines an intended action which is to be associated with pressing the icon 110. The

intended action, in the present case, is to search for relevant scoring data for the baseball player figured on the card 106. The interface description 136 has previously been stored in the on-board memory 108. The processor 116 is connected, as depicted by a dashed arrow 120 to a communications network 122. In turn, a data base 126 is connected, as depicted by a dashed arrow 124, to the network 122, and accordingly, the database 126 is accessible to the processor 116. The database 126 stores (140) database data 142 which is associated with the card 106.

It is apparent that in addition to the textual and graphic information 110, 112 displayed on the physical card 106, that an extended set of data, for example 142, is made available to the owner of the card 106 when the card 106 is inserted into the smartcard reader 128. The combination of smartcard data 112, 110, when considered in conjunction with the corresponding database data 142, forms an extended and enhanced collectible trading smartcard data set. This significantly extends the perceived "trading card world" to which the trading card owner can relate.

The visual and user interface aspects of the trading cards can be customised, and need not be defined by the card manufacturer. This ability to customise is advantageous, since it places flexibility into the hands of the trading card supplier.

A card can be customised, for example, by inserting the card into a card reader/programmer which is connected to a personal computer (PC) running an appropriate software application. Customisation information can be provided by the trading card supplier, and consequently a programmed ie. customised card is produced by the smartcard programmer/reader. The card is customised both electrically, ie in terms of the interface descriptions associated with the various icons on the card surfaces, and also in terms of the visual aspects and information printed on the card.

Fig. 2 is a flow chart of method steps by which trading cards according to the preferred embodiment can be traded. The trading process 200 commences with a selection step 202, in which a trader selects a card for consideration in a trading transaction. Thereafter, in a step 204, a card based value is assessed, this value being
5 derived from information (110, 112 see Fig. 1) on the physical card 106. This value forms one element of the overall value of the card 106.

Thereafter, in a step 206, the card in question is inserted into the smartcard reader 128. In a following step 208, the associated database data (142) is accessed. The accessing of the associated database data 142 is performed by a judicious combination
10 and/or sequence of user interactions with icons 110 on the smartcard 106 after insertion of the smartcard 106 into the smartcard reader 128. The user is able, by means of the icons such as 110, to access an associated set of data 142 which is "coupled" to the particular smartcard 106, and also to the set 100 of smartcards of which the smartcard 106 is a member. In a following step 210 the database based "value" of the card 106 is assessed.
15 The value ascribed in this regard by the trader to the card will typically be based upon the richness of the database information which is accessible by means of the card 106, as well as other features relating to the manner in which the information 142 is configured, and other information configuration parameters. Thereafter, a testing step 212, the trader has the option of either partially, or fully, exercising the interactive capabilities of the card
20 106, this option being depicted by a looping arrow 214.

Once the trader has sufficiently assessed the database based value of the card in question, the process 200 is directed to an assessment step 216, in which a composite value for the card in question 106 is assessed. This composite value is the aggregate of the card-based value, and the database-based value.

A following trading step 218 crystallises the trading transaction, and the owner of the card 106 either trades the card, or maintains ownership, depending on trading terms offered by a respective "buyer".

The entire trading process 200 can be repeated if more card trades are desired, as depicted in a decision step 220. If such further trades are indeed desired, the trading process 200 is directed, in accordance with an arrow 224, back to the initial selection step 202. Alternatively, the trading process 200 is directed to a termination step 222.

The trading process 200 can also take an abbreviated form, in which the trader progresses directly from the card based assessment step 204 to the trading step 218 as depicted by the interconnecting dashed arrow 226. It is apparent, therefore, that the trading process is flexible, and not restricted to the particular depiction provided in the figure.

Fig. 3 is a flow chart of method steps by which a game can be played using trading cards in accordance with the preferred embodiment. The game 316 commences with a step 300 in which a player selects a game card from a set of game cards. It is to be recalled that the set of trading cards 100 forms the set of game cards in the present instance, and the card being selected will, for example, be the card 106 from this set (see Fig. 1). Thereafter, the selected card is inserted into a smartcard reader in a step 302. The player is then able, in a step 304, to navigate a database (eg. 126 in Fig. 1) using card "controls", such as the icon 110. In a following step 306, database information 142 can be accessed using the aforementioned navigation as an access mechanism.

In one embodiment of the game, the player can now loop, as depicted by an arrow 312, back to the initial selection step 300, for selection of a different card. In this embodiment of the game, a game objective is restricted to accessing and considering database data 142 associated with the selected card 106, such as might be the case with an

adventure game which involves navigation from place to place with no further actions. In another embodiment of the game, the process 316 proceeds to a comparison step 310, in which accessed information for different cards in the set is compared. The various cards being compared are "played" by following an arrow 314 and subsequent steps 300 to 310,
5 in a repeating sequence.

A dashed horizontal line 308 is used to indicate that the game process 316 can typically be played in a single, or a multiplayer mode, if the step 310 is included. On the other hand, the game process 316 lying above the dashed line 308 is typically played in single player mode.

10 The methods of trading collectible interactive trading smartcards, and/or playing a collectible interactive trading card game, are preferably practiced using a conventional general-purpose computer system 400, such as that shown in Fig. 4 wherein the processes of Figs. 2, or 3 may be implemented as software, such as an application program executing within the computer system 400. In particular, the steps of trading collectible
15 interactive trading smartcards, and/or playing a collectible interactive trading card game, are effected by instructions in the software that are carried out by the computer. The software may be divided into two separate parts, one part for carrying out the trading collectible interactive trading smartcards, and/or playing a collectible interactive trading card game, and another part to manage the user interface between the latter and the user.
20 The software may be stored in a computer readable medium, including the storage devices described below, for example. The software is loaded into the computer from the computer readable medium, and then executed by the computer. A computer readable medium having such software or computer program recorded on it is a computer program product. The use of the computer program product in the computer preferably effects an
25 advantageous apparatus for trading collectible interactive trading smartcards, and/or

playing a collectible interactive trading card game, in accordance with the embodiments of the invention.

The computer system 400 comprises a computer module 401, input devices such as a keyboard 402, smartcard reader 425, and mouse 403, output devices including a printer 415 and a display device 414. A Modulator-Demodulator (Modem) transceiver device 416 is used by the computer module 401 for communicating to and from a communications network 420, for example connectable via a telephone line 421 or other functional medium. The modem 416 can be used to obtain access to the Internet, and other network systems, such as a Local Area Network (LAN) or a Wide Area Network (WAN).

The computer module 401 typically includes at least one processor unit 405, a memory unit 406, for example formed from semiconductor random access memory (RAM) and read only memory (ROM), input/output (I/O) interfaces including a video interface 407, and an I/O interface 413 for the keyboard 402 and mouse 403 and optionally a joystick (not illustrated), and an interface 408 for the modem 416. A storage device 409 is provided and typically includes a hard disk drive 410 and a floppy disk drive 411. A magnetic tape drive (not illustrated) may also be used. A CD-ROM drive 412 is typically provided as a non-volatile source of data. The components 405 to 413 of the computer module 401, typically communicate via an interconnected bus 404 and in a manner which results in a conventional mode of operation of the computer system 400 known to those in the relevant art. Examples of computers on which the embodiments can be practised include IBM-PC's and compatibles, Sun Sparcstations or alike computer systems evolved therefrom.

Typically, the application program of the preferred embodiment is resident on the hard disk drive 410 and read and controlled in its execution by the processor 405.

Intermediate storage of the program and any data fetched from the network 420 may be accomplished using the semiconductor memory 406, possibly in concert with the hard disk drive 410. In some instances, the application program may be supplied to the user encoded on a CD-ROM or floppy disk and read via the corresponding drive 412 or 411,
5 or alternatively may be read by the user from the network 420 via the modem device 416. Still further, the software can also be loaded into the computer system 400 from other computer readable medium including magnetic tape, a ROM or integrated circuit, a magneto-optical disk, a radio or infra-red transmission channel between the computer module 401 and another device, a computer readable card such as a PCMCIA card, and
10 the Internet and Intranets including email transmissions and information recorded on websites and the like. The foregoing is merely exemplary of relevant computer readable mediums. Other computer readable mediums may be practiced without departing from the scope and spirit of the invention.

The method of trading collectible interactive trading smartcards, and/or playing a
15 collectible interactive trading card game, may alternatively be implemented in dedicated hardware such as one or more integrated circuits performing the functions or sub functions of trading collectible interactive trading smartcards, and/or playing a collectible interactive trading card game. Such dedicated hardware may include graphic processors, digital signal processors, or one or more microprocessors and associated memories.

Industrial Applicability

It is apparent from the above that the embodiment(s) of the invention are applicable to the trading card and entertainment industries.

The foregoing describes only some embodiments of the present invention, and
5 modifications and/or changes can be made thereto without departing from the scope and spirit of the invention, the embodiments being illustrative and not restrictive.

For example, other dual purpose cards, namely cards which have a function in their own right, as well as an extended related functionality when inserted into a smartcard reader which is appropriately connected to a network, fall within the scope of
10 the inventive concept. Examples include business cards, recipe cards (cards having a recipe displayed on the cards themselves, as well as providing access to interactive recipe information over a network), and hotel room key-cards (used in a physical sense for room entry, as well as for accessing room service over a network, and having an address of the hotel printed on the card, along with possibly a map of the hotel location). A further
15 example is promotional cards, for example having pictures of products with an associated price and location of a sales outlet, while additionally having an on-line functionality related to purchase of products in an electronic-commerce context.

It will also be apparent, that although the game process 316 has been described in terms of a relatively "static" information comparison context, be it single or
20 multiplayer competition, further embodiments are possible within the scope of the inventive concept. Thus, for example, the smartcard control 110 (see Fig. 1) can be used on an inserted smartcard in the smartcard reader 128 to play action games. These controls can initiate actions such as picking up objects, using objects, and performing physical actions with respect to other characters. Clearly the aforementioned objects are virtual
25 objects as comprehended by the game player by means of a display. If a number of

smartcard readers are available, then multiple players can play these action games in a multiplayer context.

Claims:

1. A collectible dual-purpose smartcard system, comprising:
a plurality of collectible smartcards, each having a programmable user interface;
5 smartcard data disposed on said each smartcard which is thereby adapted to provide a collectible functionality;
a smartcard reader for reading at least some of said smartcard data, and responsive to a user interaction with said user interface;
a database, responsive to said smartcard reader, said database providing,
10 dependent upon said user interaction, database data correlated to said smartcard data, thereby enhancing said adaptation for said collectible functionality.
2. A collectible dual-purpose smartcard system according to claim 1, wherein said database is on said each smartcard.
- 15 3. A collectible dual-purpose smartcard system according to claim 1, wherein said database is connected to a network, to which network said smartcard reader is also connected.
- 20 4. A collectible trading card system, comprising:
a plurality of collectible smartcards, each having a programmable user interface;
smartcard data disposed on said each smartcard which is thereby adapted for collectible trading;
a smartcard reader for reading at least some of said smartcard data, and
25 responsive to a user interaction with said user interface;

a database, responsive to said smartcard reader, said database providing, dependent upon said user interaction, database data correlated to said smartcard data, thereby enhancing said adaptation for collectible trading.

5 5. A collectible trading card system according to claim 4, wherein said each said smartcard has at least one of an on-board processor and a memory.

6. A collectible trading card system according to claim 4, wherein at least one user selectable icon is disposed on a surface of said each smartcard, the icon being associated
10 with a corresponding interface description.

7. A collectible trading card system according to claim 6, wherein said smartcard data comprises at least one of:

data disposed on a surface of said each smartcard;
15 said corresponding interface description for said icon; and
an icon description for said at least one user selectable icon.

8. A method for trading collectible trading smartcards, each having a programmable user interface, said method comprising steps of:

20 choosing a smartcard for possible trading;
ascribing, dependent upon smartcard data of said chosen smartcard, a card based value;

assessing, dependent upon database data correlated with said smartcard data, an associated database-based value, said database data provided by a user interaction with
25 said user interface;

determining a composite smartcard value, dependent upon said card based value and said database-based value; and

trading said chosen smartcard dependent upon said composite smartcard value.

- 5 9. A computer program product comprising a computer program for implementing a collectible trading card system, each trading card having a programmable user interface said program comprising:

code for a choosing step for choosing a smartcard for possible trading;

- code for an ascribing step for ascribing, dependent upon smartcard data of said
10 chosen smartcard, a card based value;

code for an assessing step for assessing, dependent upon database data correlated with said smartcard data, an associated database-based value, said database data provided by a user interaction with said user interface;

- code for a determining step for determining a composite smartcard value,
15 dependent upon said card based value and said database-based value; and

code for a trading step for trading said chosen smartcard dependent upon said composite smartcard value.

10. A method of playing a collectible trading card game, comprising steps of:
20 (i) selecting a smartcard from a plurality of collectible trading smartcards, each said smartcard having a programmable user interface;

(ii) reading by a smartcard reader of a user interaction with said interface;

(iii) at least one of navigating, searching and exploring, dependent upon said user interaction, a database which is responsive to said smartcard reader; and

(iv) accessing associated database data; whereby said method comprises, if said game objective is comparison of corresponding database data, a further step of:

(v) comparing said associated database data with corresponding database data for another smartcard from said plurality of collectible trading smartcards.

5

11. A method of playing a collectible trading card game according to claim 10, whereby steps (i) to (v) are performed by one of:

a single player; and

multiple players, said steps being performed in a shared manner among the
10 multiple players.

12. A collectible trading card system, substantially as described herein with reference to any one of the embodiments, as said embodiment is shown in the accompanying drawings.

15

13. A method for trading collectible trading smartcards, substantially as described herein with reference to any one of the embodiments, as said embodiment is shown in the accompanying drawings.

20 14. A computer program product, substantially as described herein with reference to any one of the embodiments, as said embodiment is shown in the accompanying drawings.

15. A method of playing a collectible trading card game, substantially as described herein with reference to any one of the embodiments, as said embodiment is shown in the accompanying drawings.

5 16. A collectible dual-purpose smartcard system, substantially as described herein with reference to any one of the embodiments, as said embodiment is shown in the accompanying drawings.

DATED this Eighth Day of May 2000

10

Canon Kabushiki Kaisha

Patent Attorneys for the Applicant

SPRUSON & FERGUSON

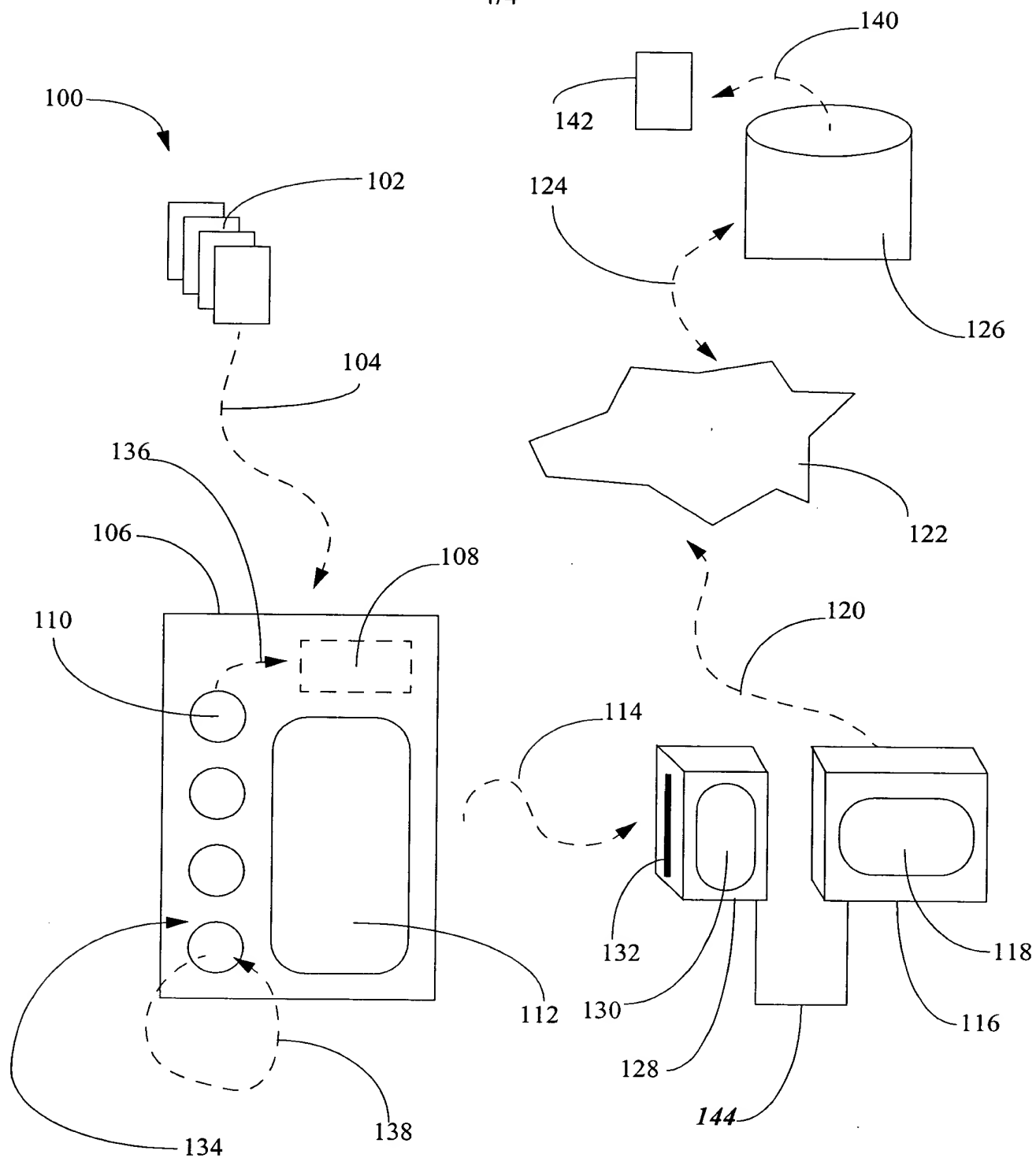


Fig. 1

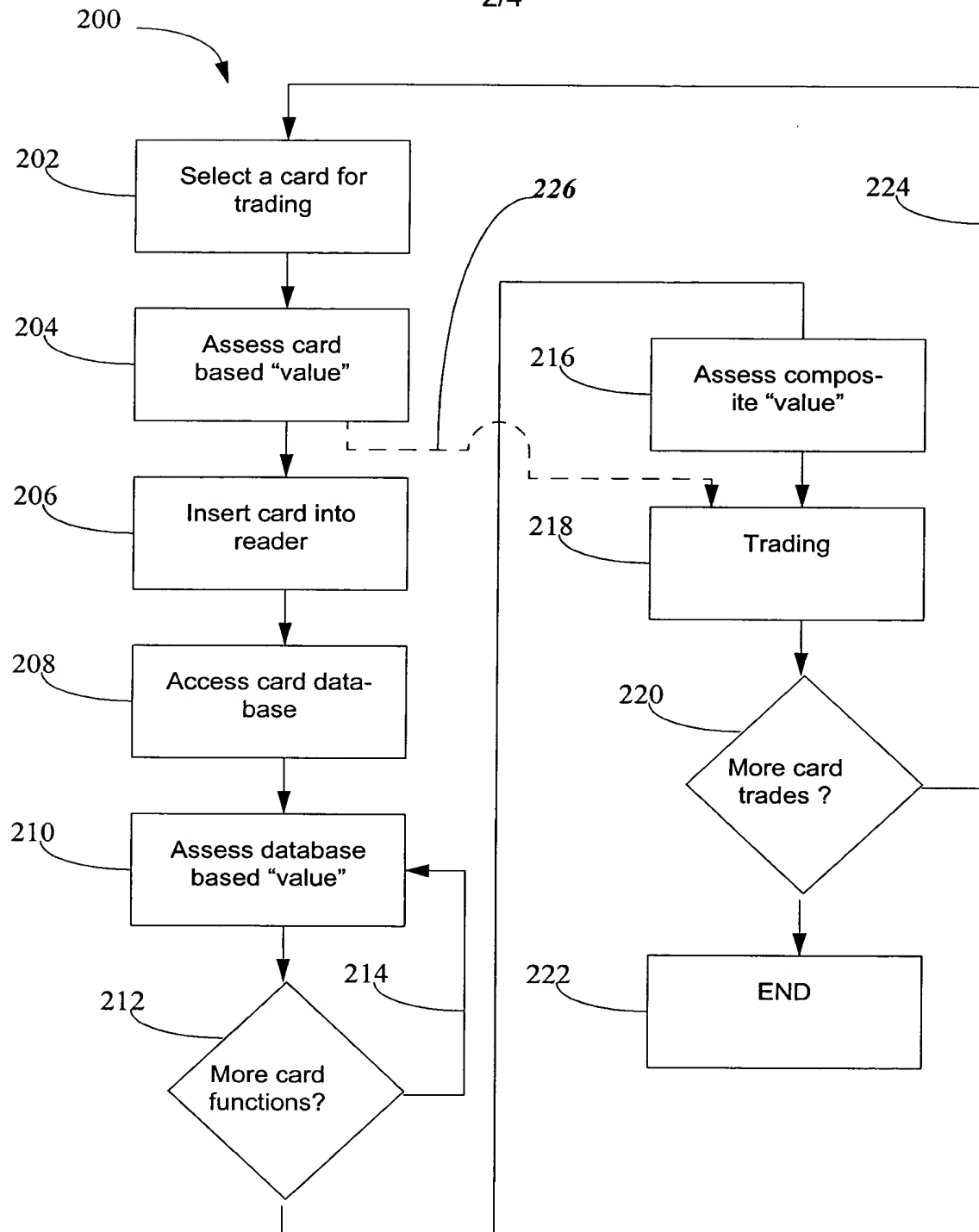


Fig. 2

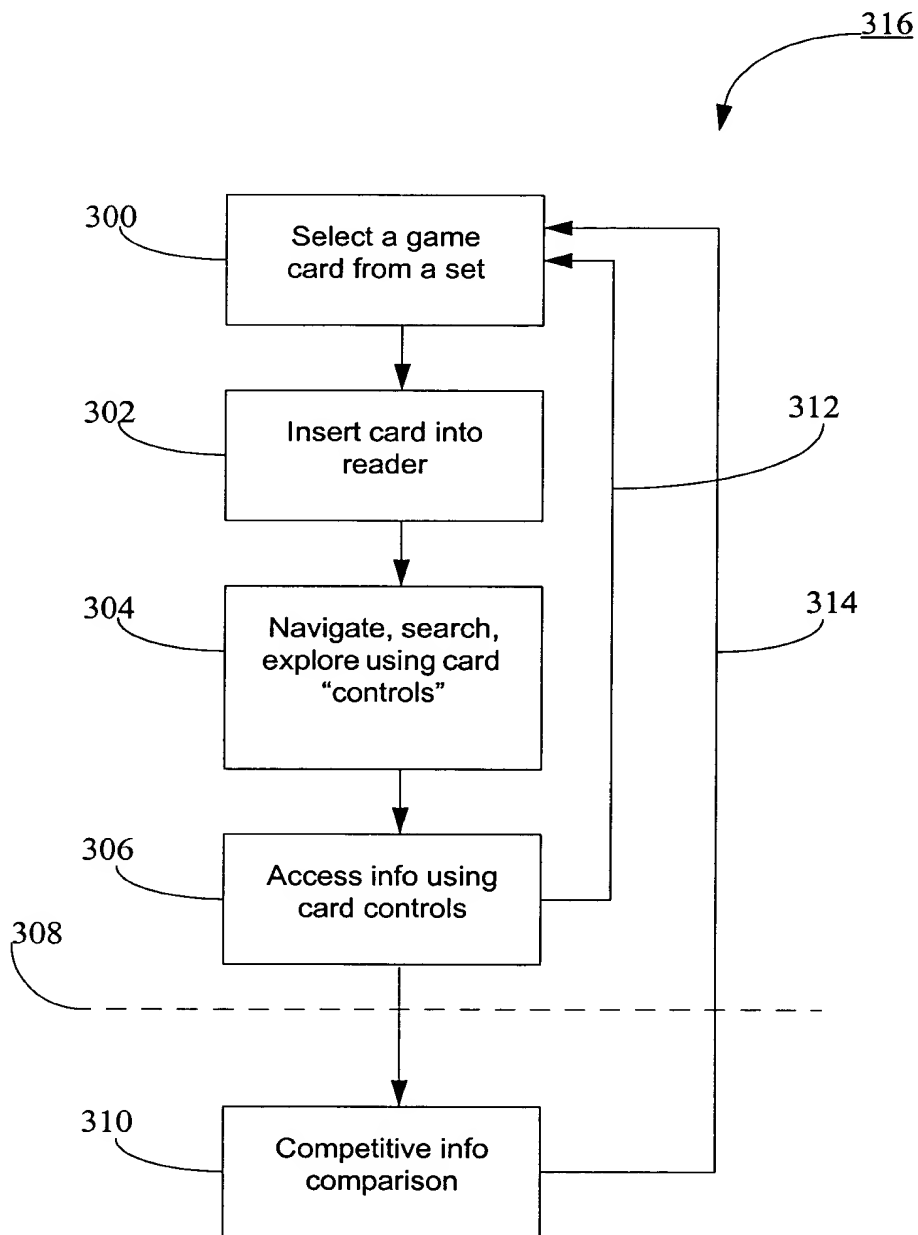


Fig. 3

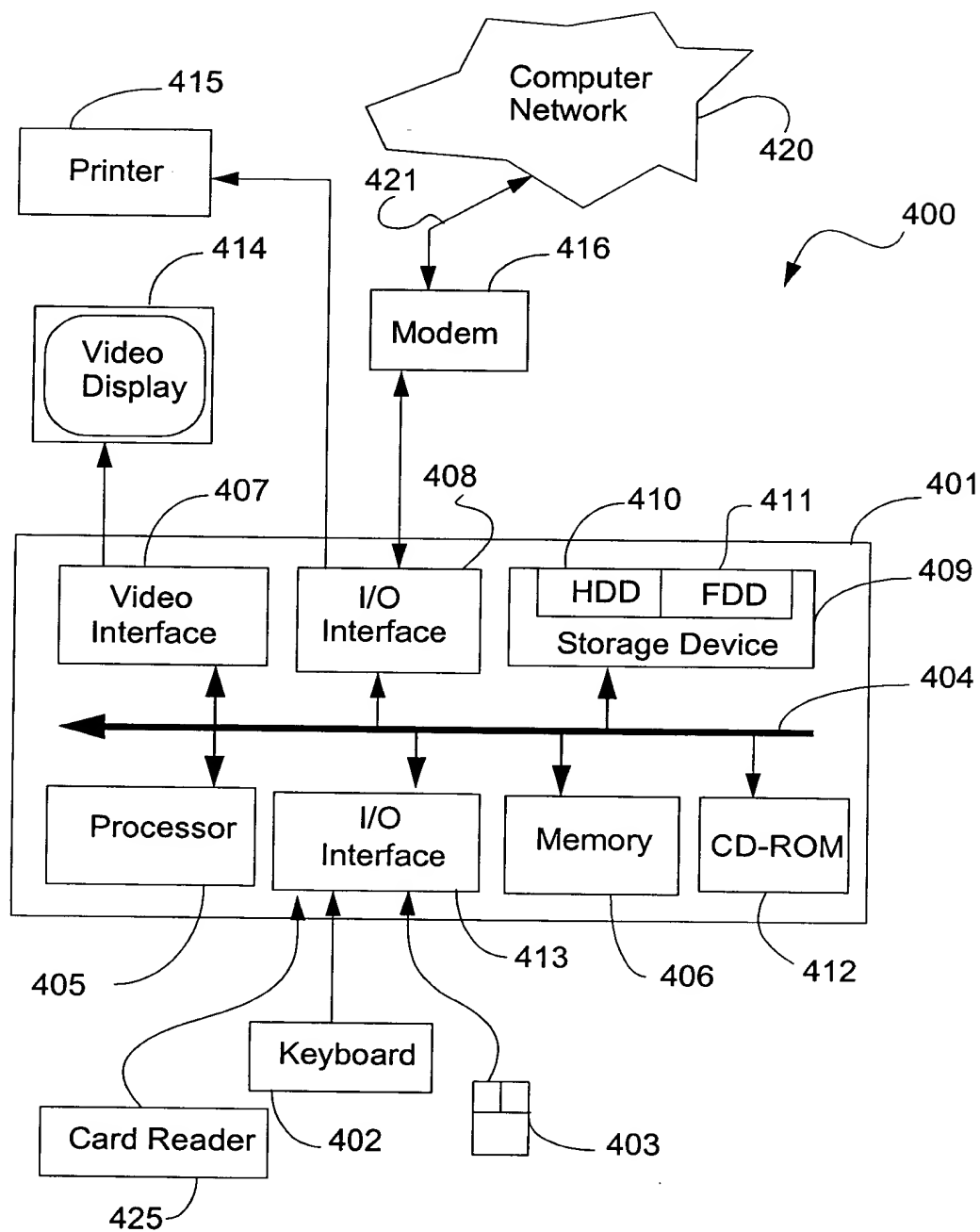


Fig. 4